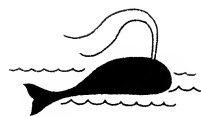


The Teacup Whale

By LYDIA GIBSON







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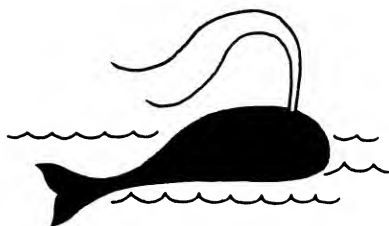


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THE TEACUP WHALE

One day early in spring David was going along the road, splish splash, squish squash. In spring when the snow has melted, the road is very muddy. David came to a big puddle in the middle of the road. He had to walk around it because it was too big to jump over. Walking around took longer than jumping, so David got interested

in the puddle on the way round, and he stopped to look in. He saw pebbles and he saw bubbles and he saw mud. He saw some sticks floating and he saw an early angleworm coming out for a springtime walk around the edge of the puddle. He saw a tiny river running in one end of the puddle and another tiny river running out the other end, made of wheeltracks in the muddy road.

Then all of a sudden he saw a little black SOMETHING in the middle of the puddle. It wiggled. It blew a little tiny fountain. Then it went down out of sight under the muddy water. David crouched down to see better and leaned over so far he almost fell in. For a minute all he could see in the puddle was himself, as if he were looking in a mirror, and the white clouds overhead in the blue sky. Then the little tiny black thing came up to the top of the water and flopped its little tiny black tail—kersplash!

“Why, my goodness gracious me!” said David with his eyes bulging out. “It’s a WHALE!”

He had a map of Nantucket on the wall beside his bed at home, with a picture of a whale on it. He knew exactly what a whale was like, from the spout that came out of his blowhole to the flukes of his spreading tail fully an inch away.

David luckily had his little tin bucket with him. He hardly ever went out without his little red tin bucket, it was so very useful for carrying all sorts of things home. This time he worked hard and splashed and puffed and caught the whale in his hands and put it in the bucket with enough water to swim in, and he carried it home.

The bucket was quite deep and dark for such a tiny whale, and you couldn't see him very well, so David went and climbed on a chair, and reached on the shelf, and got a white teacup and filled it with water before he put in the whale. The whale showed up very black and shiny and handsome in the nice white teacup. Then he carried it to his mother.



"Whatever have you got there?" asked David's mother. "Another polliwog?"

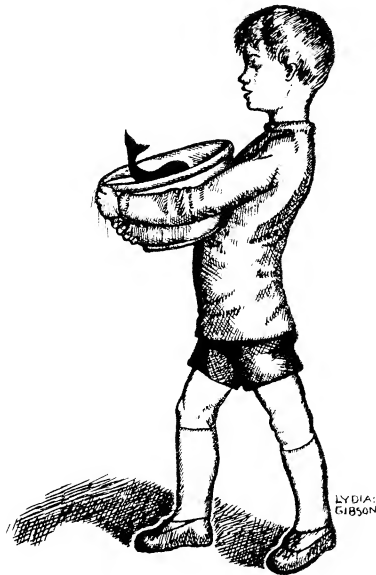
"No," said David, "that is a whale."

"Nonsense," said his mother. "Whales are enormous."

"What is a nor-mouse?" asked David.

"Whales are," said his mother; it didn't make sense, but then very few things did. She went on: "It means very big indeed. Bigger than a horse. Bigger than a car. Bigger than an elephant. Whales are enormous. But what a VERY funny polliwog this is!"

Every day the whale grew. David fed him bits of chopped meat and he got bigger and bigger and he got stronger and stronger. One morning when David came down to breakfast the teacup was smashed into bits and the whale lay flopping in the saucer in a few drops of water. He had grown too big and too strong for the little white teacup. So David went to the kitchen and got a strong yellow bowl, the kind they mix



ginger cookies in. The whale swam in that and it fitted him nicely. He went round and round and round to the left side and admired the scenery, and then he turned and went round and round and round to the right side and admired the scenery. He never seemed to get tired of doing it. For a good many days the whale swam in the yellow mixing bowl. But he was growing all the time. He ate boiled rice—at first ten grains a day and then more and more. He got bigger and bigger and he got stronger and stronger. One day he gave a JUMP, and landed on the floor. He was too big for the yellow bowl.

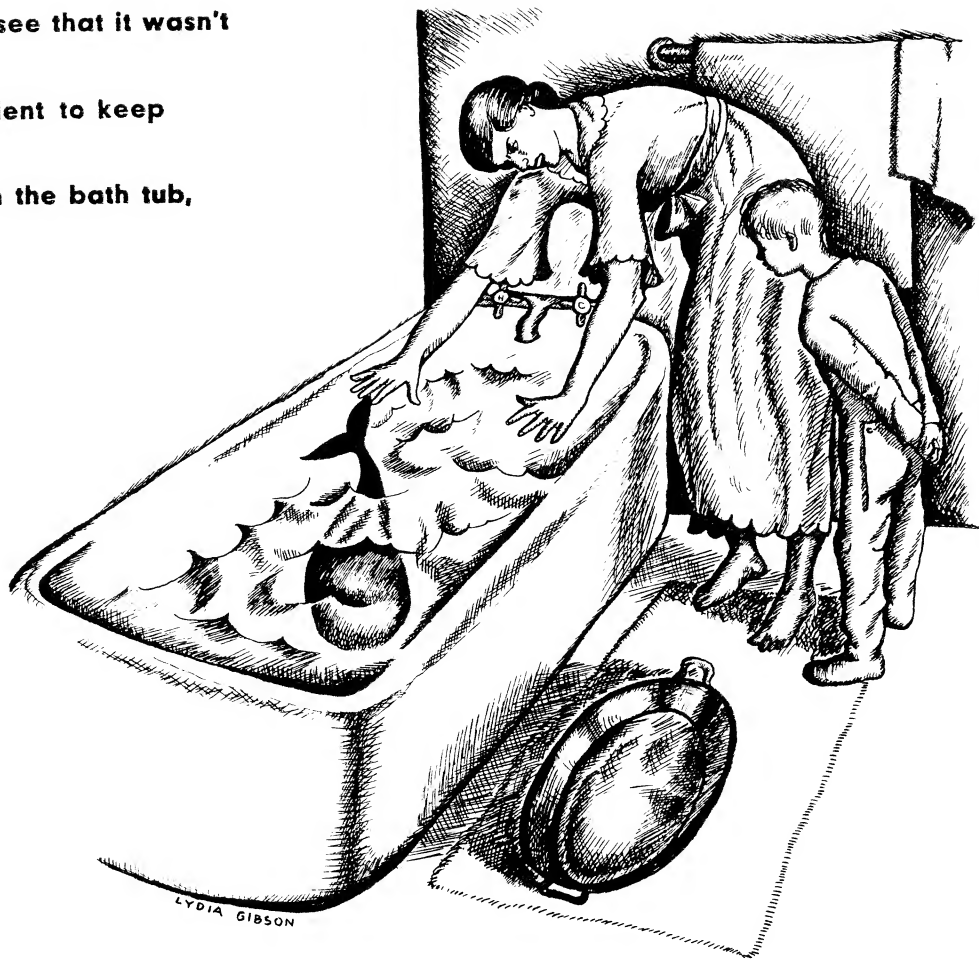
David sat down and put his elbows on his knees and put his chin in his hands. That was to make thinking easier. Then he thought what to do. The watering can was too small. The soup kettle was too small. The brass fruit bowl was too small. The wash basin was too small, and, besides, they couldn't wash their hands if there were a whale in it. So he asked his mother if he could borrow the wash boiler. She said yes, if he

would be careful of it. So the whale lived in the wash boiler. All the time he was getting bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger, and the little fountains he blew through the blowhole in the top of his head were getting bigger too, and he couldn't turn around.

"I do declare," said David's mother. "I never in all my born days saw a polliwog blow fountains through the top of his head! What a VERY funny polliwog!"

The whale lived in the wash boiler about a week. He knocked over the wash boiler one day and made a big puddle on the floor. So David had to move him again. He thought and he thought. There wasn't any place in the house now big enough for the whale to turn around in but the bath tub. So David moved the whale into the bath tub. By this time he was about as big as a big cat or a smallish dog, and a very pretty shiny black like patent leather shoes. He was getting so tame that he used to come swimming up to the top of water and blow a fountain whenever David whistled for him.

But you can see that it wasn't
very convenient to keep
the whale in the bath tub,



because whenever anybody wanted to take a bath, they had to bring the dish pan up from the kitchen to put the whale into, and it was hard to keep him from jumping out of the dish pan. He was so impatient to get back into the big tub where he could swim around in comfort, he simply wouldn't lie still long enough for anyone to take a bath. And every day the whale grew. By this time he was eating left-over tea biscuits, toast and vegetables. He got bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger. At last one day David's mother said, "I simply cannot and will not be bothered lifting out this great big clumsy heavy polliwog every time anyone in this house takes a bath!"

So David and his father got into the car and they drove down the hill to the Village. They went past the Grocery Store and the Butcher Store and the Drugstore and the Post Office and the Railroad Station till they came to Mister Barlow's Hardware Store.

"Good morning, Mister Barlow," said David.



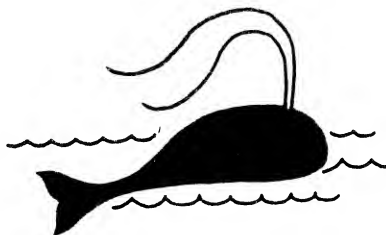
"Good morning, David, fine weather we're having and what can I do for you this fine morning?" said Mister Barlow.

"I have a whale which is growing very fast," said David, "and I must have a tank to keep him in. Perhaps you keep tanks in your store?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mister Barlow proudly, and showed him several tanks. But they were goldfish tanks.

"Oh, dear no," said David, "these aren't NEARLY big enough! Show me some bigger tanks, please."

But Mister Barlow didn't have any bigger tanks. David had to order one made four

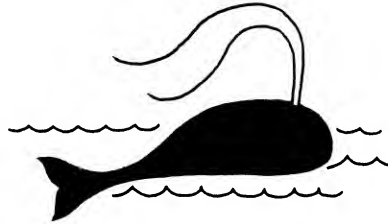


times as big as the bath tub and twice as deep and all lined with tin to make it water-tight.

In two or three days the tank was finished and Mister Barlow brought it up to David's house. They put it in the garden right beside the porch so they could watch the whale easily, and they filled it with water. It was summertime now, so the whale enjoyed living in the garden. He grew very fast from being out in the sun. He got bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger. Pretty soon he got as big as a pony.

All the children in the neighborhood used to come to visit David's whale. They got sardines at the Grocery Store and threw them to the whale one at a time for a treat. They brought the whale ice cream cones, because whales come from the polar regions and they thought he must miss the icebergs. But the whale didn't like ice cream cones which melted and made the water horrid and cloudy; so the children took turns changing the water in the tank, with the garden hose.

One day some visitors came a long way to see the whale. There was Mister Queebus and Missis Queebus and their little boy Alexander. They came in their car all the way from Woodstock, ninety miles away, and they were all dressed up in their Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. They stood in a row on the porch and looked down on the whale in his tank, and admired him. The whale was so pleased with all this admiration that



he blew an especially splendid fountain in honor of the Queebus family, when David whistled. It was his only way of thanking them. But now he was so big that his fountain was like the smoke that you see coming out of the smokestack of a locomotive, when you sit in the car at the railroad crossing gates and watch the express go roaring



by. So the fountain blew all over the Queebus family and their best visiting clothes got soaking wet and it made them very cross. David's mother said, "REALLY we can't keep that ridiculous polliwog of David's any longer. It's MUCH too big. And I don't believe it will ever be a frog anyway!"

David was getting quite tired of changing the water in the big tank with the garden



hose every few days, and of running around the Village with his red bucket collecting bread and scraps from all the neighbors to feed the hungry whale, who ate a great deal. And the whale was growing all the time. Day by day he was getting bigger and he was getting stronger.

So David telephoned to Tony, the Express Man, to bring up his truck. And he telephoned to Nick, the Garage Man, to bring his wrecking car, and all together they hoisted the whale onto the truck by means of the derrick on the wrecking car, with wet bath towels pinned around his head to keep him from drying out on the ride.

David climbed up on the driver's seat beside Tony the Express Man and they went down the hill to the Village. They went past the Grocery Store and past the Butcher Store and past the Drugstore and past the Post Office and past the Railroad Station till they came to Mister Barlow's Hardware Store. There David bought a very long strong chain, and then they drove the whale down to the wharf that stuck out into



the river. They hooked the whale to the wharf with the chain around his tail because he hadn't any neck, and David promised to come down every day to visit him.

Every day David's father drove him down to the wharf and David whistled to his



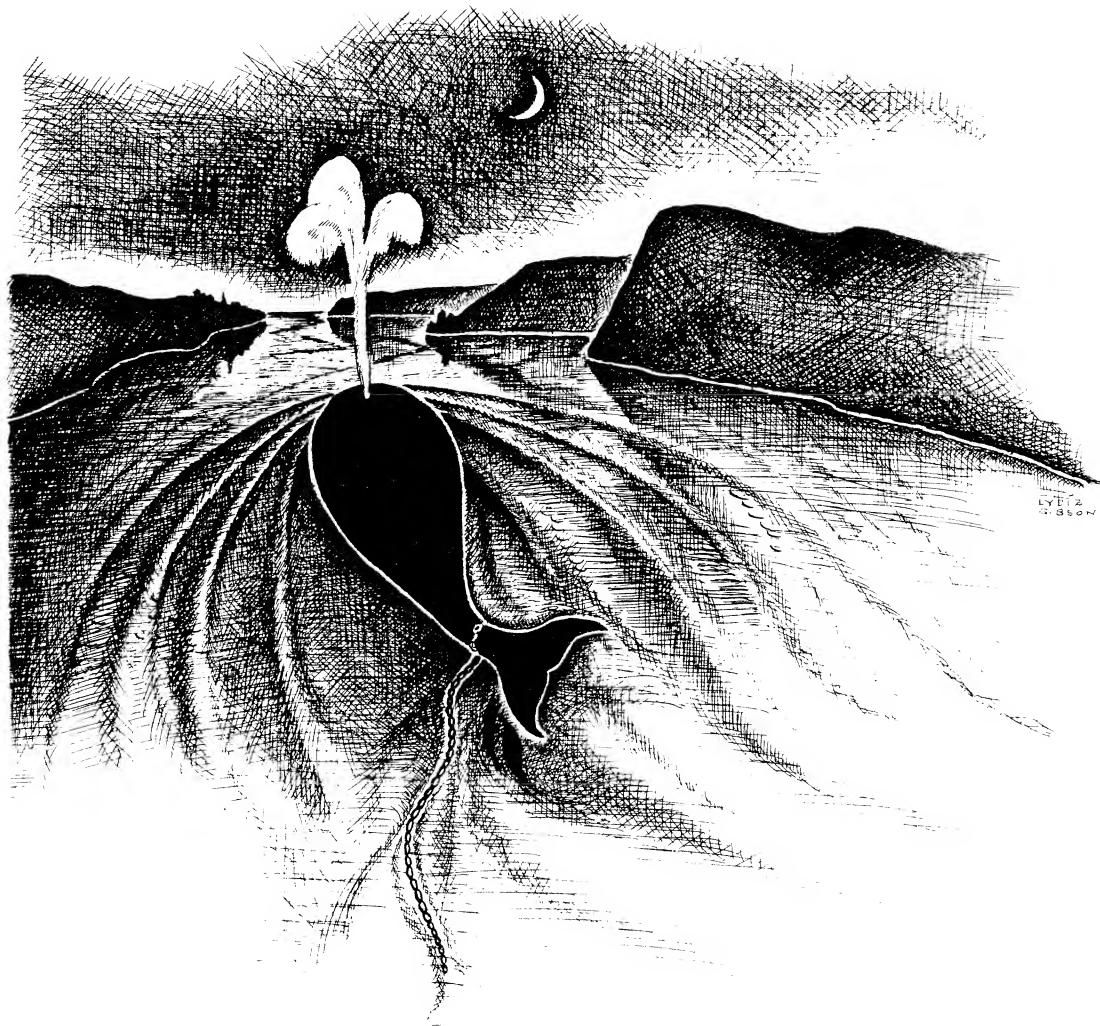
LYDIA GIBSON

whale. The whale came up close alongside the wharf and blew lovely fountains for

David. He was a very happy and comfortable whale, swimming around the wharf and eating fresh fish right out of the river, and sleeping under the wharf at night like a dog in his kennel. He was a great pet with all the people in the Village. The Grocer brought his three little boys to see him, and the Butcher brought his little girl, and the Postman brought his twins, and the old Station Agent who sold railroad tickets for train rides brought his little golden-haired grandchild.

They all admired the whale and some of them brought him sardines out of a can. But catching fresh fish out of the river had spoiled the whale for sardines out of a can, and he would spit them out for the crabs and fish to eat.

People used to come out from the City on Sundays just to see David's whale. The man who owned the wharf was planning to charge ten cents admission from everyone, to pay him for his trouble. But David couldn't see what trouble the man had; David took care of the whale, David had tied him up, and David had collected food for him in



his bucket all the while he was growing! But all the time the whale was getting stronger and stronger.

One morning David went down the wharf to visit the whale as usual. He whistled and whistled for the whale. But the whale didn't come to blow him a fountain. Then David noticed that the wharf was all broken at the end; planks were ripped apart, and the big heavy piles were pulled sidewise.

The whale had broken the wharf in the night. He had broken loose and had swum majestically down the river to the sea, a mighty full-grown whale, towing a piece of the chain behind him.

David went home and told his mother the whale had gone, and his mother said, "Well, David, it **WAS** a whale after all!"



